

<b>Chef and Cook</b>		<b>Northern Territory</b>
<b>ANZSCO Code:</b> 3513-11, 3514-11	September 2009	
<b>Labour market rating</b>	3513-11 Chef – No shortage 3514-11 Cook – No shortage	
<b>Comment:</b>		

### **Occupational demand**

ABS Census data shows that there were just over 1100 Chefs and Cooks employed in the NT in 2006, a number stable compared with the 2001 level. Since 2006, ABS Labour Force data indicates that the number of Chefs and Cooks employed in the NT has increased. Retail trade figures for the NT (ABS; 8501.0 October 2009 Retail Trade) show growth in turnover for both Cafes and Restaurants and Food Retailing over the past year. DEEWR's skilled vacancy survey indicates advertised vacancies for Chefs and Cooks peaked in 2006, but have remained frequent since then.

### **Occupational supply**

The number of people in cooking apprenticeships has been in decline for the past three years. In addition to reduced apprenticeship commencements, a high cancellation rate leads to few people completing their apprenticeship. On average there have been 15 apprenticeship completions per year over the past seven years, providing a relatively low local training rate and leaving a high reliance on recruiting travellers and transient workers. Some employers have needed to source people from overseas to recruit on skilled migration visas for suitable supply.

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market**

Employers were able to fill the majority (92 per cent) of advertised vacancies, which was an improvement over the 75 per cent fill rate achieved last year. There were significant increases in both suitable and total applicants applying per vacancy. However, employers commonly reported that other supply issues for the industry remained (such as staff churn, reliability and training quality). Some employers (such as catering businesses and retirement villages), although not offering particularly competitive remuneration, were able to maintain a more stable workforce due to consistent day time schedules and less stressful work environments. Senior positions (head chefs, sous-chefs and grill chefs) were more difficult to fill than chef de partie and unqualified cooking vacancies. A reliance on unqualified cooks and kitchen hands to cover cooking functions is common.

A high turnover rate was a common issue for employers and they often needed to cover vacancies by hiring backpackers to temporally fill positions. The highly transient nature typical of many people recruited to vacancies meant that keeping positions filled was a regular concern. The majority of vacancies surveyed were due to staff turnover; however, some were also due to increased seasonal demand.

Employers suggested a high wastage rate (with qualified Chefs and Cooks choosing to work in other industries) was an issue for the occupation and was caused by poor work conditions such as long hours, late shifts and low pay. The high cost of living in the NT, particularly the difficulty securing an affordable rental property, impacts on the ability to both attract and retain Chefs and Cooks in the NT.

### **Labour market outlook**

Demand for Cooks and Chefs in the NT over the coming year is expected to remain relatively stable. However, nationally demand may increase more strongly with economic growth following the global recession. It is expected this would adversely impact local supply due to a net flow of Chefs and Cooks returning interstate. Compounded by an expected drop in apprenticeship completions and continued high staff turnover, the occupational rating for Chefs and Cooks is likely to slip back to shortage next year.